



DEVELOPMENTS OF REGIONAL IMPACT

Final Report

Northeast Georgia Regional Commission • 305 Research Drive, Athens, Georgia • www.negr.org

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) has completed its review of the following Development of Regional Impact (DRI). This report contains the NEGRC’s assessment of how the proposed project relates to the policies, programs, and projects articulated in the Regional Plan and Regional Resource Plan. Also included is an assessment of likely interjurisdictional impacts resulting from the proposed development, as well as all comments received from identified affected parties and others during the fifteen-day comment period.

The materials presented in this report are purely advisory and under no circumstances should be considered as binding or infringing upon the host jurisdiction’s right to determine for itself the appropriateness of development within its boundaries.

Transmittal of this DRI report officially completes the DRI process. The submitting local government may proceed with whatever final official actions it deems appropriate regarding the proposed project, but it is encouraged to take the materials presented in the DRI report into consideration when rendering its decision.

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| Project I.D.: | DRI #3714 |
| Name of Project: | Valentine Business Center |
| Name of Host Jurisdiction: | Jackson County |

Background

The developer’s request to Jackson County for rezoning initiated the review. Parcels 078 029 and 091 013 are currently zoned A2 (“Agricultural Rural Farm”) and are proposed to be rezoned to GI (“General Industrial”). Potentially affected parties were asked to submit comments on the proposal during the 15-day period of 6/7/22–6/22/22.

Proposed Development

CBD Investments, LLC, is proposing construction of 2,543,300 square feet of industrial warehouse space on a 331-acre site on Bill Wright Road in unincorporated Jackson County (parcel numbers: 078 023, 078 023A, 078 023B, 078 029, 079 001A, 091 007L, and 091 013). Additionally, the site plan includes 1,152 car parking spaces, 654 trailer parking spaces, and 598 loading bays, as well as five detention ponds for stormwater management. This project is part of a multiphase project. This phase, and the overall project, are expected to be completed in 2026.

Currently, there are two houses on parcel 079 001A, as well as a cemetery on parcel 078 023B that is proposed to be relocated. Bill Wright Road is a gravel road that passes through the site. A portion of Bill Wright Road would be relocated to pass between two of the buildings, and approximately 4,600 feet of Bill Wright Road would be improved to industrial road specifications. The rest of the site is currently a combination of undeveloped woodlands, pastures, and wetlands.

Compatibility with Existing Plans

Most of the site is identified on Jackson County's Character Area Map (dated 9/18/2019) as "Urban" and on Jackson County's Future Land Use Map (dated 9/10/2020) as "Industrial." Within the Urban Character Area, industrial uses, including warehouses, are allowed and encouraged in locations specified as "Industrial" on the Future Land Use Map. Under the Urban Character Area, sanitary sewer, public water, and stormwater management are required. Wetland and cemetery portions of the site are identified on the Character Area Map as "Conservation" and on the Future Land Use Map as "Parks/Recreation/Conservation." Within the Conservation Character Area, development and buildings are discouraged and industrial land uses are listed as "inapplicable." The site plans indicate that the only new construction in Conservation areas is the improvement of Bill Wright Road. Since the Conservation Character Area states that "environmental considerations dominate where provided" for road design improvements, the developer should take extra care to minimize the impact of construction in the conservation area.

The site is identified as "Developed" on the Northeast Georgia Regional Plan's Regional Land Use Map (dated 6/7/2018). The Regional Plan recommends development that matches the region's workforce, prices in the lifecycle cost of infrastructure, creates a sense of place, builds a compact development pattern on existing infrastructure, creates diverse and affordable housing, and complements existing and planned transportation options—especially non-automobile transportation modes. The applicant states that the project can be staffed with the region's existing workforce. No information was provided in the application that would enable determination of whether the proposal prices in the lifecycle cost of infrastructure. While Bill Wright Road will have to be improved to industrial road specifications, the project largely builds on existing infrastructure because the road already exists, and the project will not require an extension of water or sewer lines. Because of the nature of warehouses, this proposal does little to create a sense of place, and it is not a compact development. However, the site's location near I-85 in an industrial area makes it an appropriate location for the proposed development.

The proposed site is labeled as an area of "Rapid Development" in the NEGRC's Areas Requiring Special Attention (ARSA) Map. In these areas, the primary concern is that development could outpace the availability of community facilities and services. Light industrial and warehouses are acceptable lands use under this label. However, it is recommended that Jackson County attempt to pair this development with appropriate housing and transportation options by building appropriately priced housing nearby for the development's projected workforce.

Potential Interjurisdictional Impacts

The applicant states that wetlands and floodplains are likely to be affected by the proposed development, that a portion of on-site streams and wetlands may be filled in, and that all necessary procedures will be followed. The National Wetland Inventory (NWI) identifies 74 acres of wetlands onsite, and numerous creeks cross the site, including Opossum Creek. The site plans indicate that approximately 2 acres of existing wetlands will be partially disturbed, and portions of any improvements to Bill Wright Road would go through the Opossum Creek floodplain. The applicant estimates that 38 percent of the site will be covered by impervious surfaces, which will be managed by the five proposed detention ponds. This is below the desired 60 percent threshold set in Jackson County's land-use policy for industrial areas. The applicant states that the development is not likely to affect historic resources; however, the site plan identifies a cemetery that would be removed and relocated as part of the project. The applicant states that the project is unlikely to affect any of the other environmental quality factors identified on the DRI Additional Form, including water supply watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, protected mountain and river corridors, and other environmentally sensitive resources.

The Northeast Georgia Regional Plan's Conservation and Development Map (dated 7/19/2018) identifies 74 acres of "Conservation" land onsite and 368 acres of "Conservation" land within one mile of the site. This "Conservation" land includes 12 acres of Regionally Important Resource (RIR) land onsite and 48 acres of RIR land within one mile of the site, as identified in the Northeast Georgia Resource Management Plan for Regionally Important Resources (dated 8/7/2018). No specific Regionally Important Resource sites are identified within one mile of the proposed site.

The site plan includes both the 25-foot state stream buffer and the 50-foot stream buffer for Jackson County. No development is proposed within these buffers, and the only development within FEMA floodplain areas are the improvements to Bill Wright Road. The proposal should be designed to minimize disruption to the existing streams, associated wetlands, and floodplains to avoid future erosion, flooding, and degraded water quality onsite and downstream from the site. Low-impact design measures, like bioswales, rain gardens, and other green infrastructure should be incorporated into the project design. At minimum, the project should be in accordance with the latest edition of the Georgia Stormwater Management Manual (Blue Book) and meet all relevant EPD requirements.

No traffic study was submitted by the applicant, but the applicant projects 4,000 new daily trips, including 346 AM peak hour trips and 350 PM peak hour trips from the proposed development. Given that the surrounding area is primarily warehousing developments and the project is located close to I-85, it makes sense that the project does not prioritize non-automobile transportation such as biking and walking.

The project would be served by the Jackson County water and sewer systems with an estimated daily water supply demand of 0.23 MGD and sewerage flow of 0.23 MGD. The applicant indicated that these demands can be covered by existing capacities and that no line extensions would be needed to serve the site. The applicant estimates the project would generate 4,450 tons of solid waste annually and that sufficient landfill capacity exists to handle this waste. According to the Northeast Georgia Regional Solid Waste Authority's *Regional Solid Waste Management Plan (2021-2031)*, almost all municipal solid waste (MSW) generated in Jackson County is disposed of at a landfill in Banks County. No hazardous waste would be generated by the project.

The applicant estimates that the project would be worth \$195 million at build-out in 2026 and generate \$855,000 in annual local taxes. On a per-acre basis, the project would be worth approximately \$589,000 and generate approximately \$2,583 in tax revenue. Prior to approval, the County should measure the lifecycle costs of the infrastructure needed to serve this project to ensure that they would not be committing to more maintenance expenses than the new tax revenue can cover.

Comments from Affected Parties

Alan Hood, Airport Safety Data Program Manager, Georgia Department of Transportation

The proposed 2,543,300 square feet of industrial warehouse space on a 331-acre is 3.5 miles west of the Jackson County Airport (JCA), and is located outside of any FAA approach or departure surfaces, and airport compatible land use areas, and does not appear to impact the airport.

However, if any construction or construction equipment reaches 200' AGL or more, an FAA Form 7460-1 must be submitted to the Federal Aviation Administration. That may be done online at <https://oeaaa.faa.gov>. The FAA must be in receipt of the notification, no later than 120 days prior to construction. The FAA will evaluate the potential impact of the project on protected airspace associated with the airports and advise the proponent if any action is necessary.